

# Landscape Management

A well-maintained landscape not only looks beautiful, it also increases property value. Unfortunately, uninformed homeowners, in their zeal to create a beautiful landscape, can inadvertently cause environmental problems. These problems include air and water pollution, soil erosion, and wasted water. Water and fertilizer are wasted when they are allowed to run over the surface of the ground and into storm drains. Soil erosion occurs when, during rain, bare soil is washed off the land into storm drains or ditches.

A gas-powered lawn mower can produce as much pollution in 1 hour as driving a car for 10 hours. This not only contaminates the air we breathe, but the pollutants can also settle out of the air onto the land and waterways, to eventually end up in neighborhood creeks and in the Bay.

## Problems:

- # Excess nitrogen, phosphorus, and pesticides are found in our groundwater and the Chesapeake Bay.
- # Eroding soil running off the landscape carries nutrients and deposits them in streams, lakes, rivers, and the Bay.
- # Water is sometimes in short supply, especially during periods of summer drought.
- # Gas mowers and power plants emit pollutants that wash into local bodies of water.
- # Trees are cleared from home sites.
- # Large amounts of impervious surfaces, such as pavement and roofs, increase rainfall runoff and peak stream flows, leading to increased erosion from bare areas and streambanks, and downstream flooding.

## Solutions:

- # Minimize impervious paved surfaces (sidewalks and driveways) in the landscape. Use wood chips, gravel, stepping stones, or bricks laid in sand instead.
- # Direct the flow of water from downspouts onto the lawn or planting beds, where it can soak in.
- # Practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) where possible to reduce the amount of pesticides in the environment.
- # Minimize the lawn area if possible. Convert excess lawn into a flower bed, border, or a mulched planting bed.
- # Plant groundcovers on slopes where mowing is difficult. Build retaining walls to hold soil in place on steep slopes; then plant perennials, bulbs and/or shrubs behind the walls.
- # Improve your soil by adding organic matter. This makes a better environment for plant roots to grow, which in turn holds the soil in place.
- # Leave a buffer strip of grass 15 feet or more from the edge of a stream, river, or other body of water to filter runoff. Plant trees, shrubs, or grass.
- # Collect rainwater in a covered barrel or cistern for later use in the yard.
- # Incorporate plants into mulched planting beds instead of planting them individually throughout the landscape. Group plants with the same water requirements together.

- # Use plants adapted to this region (native plants). They can better withstand periods of drought and are resistant to many pests and diseases.
- # Irrigate with soaker hoses or drip irrigation. The initial cost may be higher, but it saves both water and money over time.
- # Water the lawn only when grass shows stress; then water deeply and slowly.
- # Reduce polluting emissions into the environment from small engines such as gas-powered equipment. Instead, use hand tools, reel mowers, or electric lawn tools.